

January 4, 2015

Good Morning, for the beginning of our message today I am going to talk about the “Incandescent Light Bulb”. In our modern world the “Incandescent Light Bulb” has become somewhat of an “endangered species”. Now what I mean when I speak of an Incandescent Light bulb is the light bulb that Thomas Edison invented back in the early part of the 20th century. I believe it might be safe to assume that it was with this kind of light bulb that most of us grew up with. Now, here is a challenge for you to try doing; the next time you go to the store look for one of those old fashioned light bulbs instead of the modern, fluorescent, energy saving, coils of glass. You may find this to be a greater challenge than you think. Now, I have to admit that I am not a big fan of the new-coiled fluorescent light bulbs. You know at first they were great because of the cost savings, but I soon discovered that I’m not crazy about the moment you turn one on and do not find that bright blinding light that used to squint your eyes especially if you’re a just waking up. But instead you discover this dull sensation of dimness that seems to be a 40-watt bulb instead of a 75-watt bulb until it “warms up”. Now I was going to say 100 watt bulb but I believe if you turn one on, now days, you have a good chance of getting arrested by the energy saving commission. So, why all the talk about the old fashioned incandescent light bulb this morning? Well first off, I wanted to bring us up to speed on the differences in light bulbs that we have today in our homes today. And secondly, I wanted to bring to our attention a small bit of research that I have discovered as to the effectiveness of the old incandescent light bulbs. Would you believe me if I told you that you actually get better ideas and inspirations while sitting under an old incandescent light bulb then a new modern coiled fluorescent one? Now how many of us can remember the illustration of a light bulb appearing above the head of a person who just got an new idea. Well, we have come to find out that this illustration has some truth to it. You see there was a study completed by Tufts University that showed that students who sat under an old-fashioned incandescent light bulb received better test scores than those students who sat under fluorescent ones. In fact the researchers came to this conclusion. That

our insights in life can be influenced by things that happen out side of our bodies as well as inside our bodies. Well, the Wise men or three kings could have told the researchers that this was true long before now. You see when the Wise Men found the baby Jesus, in Bethlehem; their lives were changed forever. In fact our traditional church calendar sets aside a day that celebrates the very moment that their lives were changed and it is called the Day of Epiphany. And guess what? Next Tuesday, January 6th is that very day. So what is an epiphany? Well one part of the definition has to do with our light bulb research in that an Epiphany is a moment in which we suddenly see or understand something in a new or very clear way. And the second part of the definition is recognizing and celebrating the epiphany that happened the moment the Wise Men laid their eyes on the baby Jesus. You see not only were their lives changed at that moment our lives were changed as well. In an answer to the question, "What is an Epiphany?" we find this description, "The Epiphany celebrates God's revealing or manifesting of Jesus' identity as true God, Messiah, and Savior of the world. It not only commemorates the fact that Jesus appeared to save us, but that God revealed the identity of Jesus to the world." Most Christians think of the Day of Epiphany as being about the Wise Men bringing gifts to the baby Jesus but the symbolism goes deeper than that, much deeper. You see, when the shepherds were told by the angels to go and find the baby Jesus we wondered why the angels choose the shepherds first to tell. We realized that the angels choose the shepherd's first because they represented the lower class, the misfits, those written off by society and those who did not have hope in finding a relationship with God. And by the angles choosing the shepherds first was an example for us to know of the love that God has for us no matter who we are or what we have done in our lives. When God sees us He sees into our hearts and provides us with all that we need so we are able to come to Him and find His love and peace in our lives. Our celebration of Christmas is a time for us to be humble, grateful and thankful for the Birth of Jesus Christ. Because it is through Jesus Christ that we will find God's provisions for us so we may share in His eternal kingdom. So

simply put, we are God's children and He will take care of us. Now as we think a little bit more about the details of the first Christmas it may come to us that those around Jesus at that time were Jews. And for the Jews to receive their long awaited messiah was a remarkable miracle of prophecy that came true. But wait a minute, what about the rest of the world who were not Jewish? Did Jesus come for them too? Our answer is yes. Jesus came for all of mankind. So how can we be so sure that Jesus came for all of us? We know this because just like the example of the shepherds first hearing about the birth of Jesus; we have the example of the Wise Men's visit to the baby Jesus as he lay in Bethlehem. You see their visit was a lot more than the delivery of precious gifts. Their visit was about God bringing his message of hope and salvation to all people on earth to hear, even the pagans, and even the gentiles. As we remember the story of the Wise Men's visit did any of us ever wonder what religion or nationality they were? Did we ever wonder what kind of morality these wise men held in their hearts? Does anyone even know what these men did for a living? What would you think if I told you they were magicians? What would you think if I told you they were astrologists? And what would you think if I told you they were priests? Actually according to many different accounts the Wise Men were magicians, astrologists, and priests. One account that I found told of the Wise Men as being priests from the area that we know of today as Kurdistan. The Wise Men were more than just priests as they were a sect of magicians and astrologers that were respected very highly for their advice offered to Kings and other high royalty about the future of their kingdoms. The Wise Men were the scientists of their day as they were well learned in the areas of astrology and astronomy. They studied the heavens and also interpreted dreams for insights into the future. Since the Wise Men were held in such a high respect King Herod even allowed and welcomed their visit to him as they journeyed to follow the Star of Bethlehem in their quest to find the Christ Child. As Herod visited with the Wise Men he asked of them to let him know of the whereabouts of Christ Child when they located Him so he could visit and honor him too. But we know that

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Herod's real intention was to find and kill this "new King of the Jews". Herod thought of himself as the present "King of the Jews" and did not want to lose any of his status or power that he held with the Jews of his kingdom. But the Wise Men did not honor Herod's request because after they visited the Christ Child, and presented their gifts, they followed a different route home and avoided King Herod altogether. And for most Christians who celebrate Christmas this is where they usually end the Story of the Wise Men. But in our message today, I would like to make us aware of the real impact of the Wise Men's visit to the Christ Child. You see the Wise Men may have presented themselves as magicians, dream interpreters, priests and astrologers but they left the Christ Child as Christians. They were each warned in the same dream not to return to Herod. So why did they head this warning and not return to Herod? Could it be that they became Christians at the sight of the Christ Child and knew in their hearts that the Christ Child was truly the Son of God. So now we can see that the story of the Wise Men had a much greater lesson for us to learn from. Maybe what we are to learn from the Wise Men's visit is that we too are led by God to find Jesus in our hearts. Maybe what we are to learn from the Wise Men's visit is that we too can change our lives from what we were before and it is Jesus who will help us with that change in our lives. An maybe we are to learn from the Wise Men's visit that God loves us all so much that He gave us the greatest gift known on this earth, His Son, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Normally I would end our message by saying Amen, but our message today has not ended as we are going to continue our message about the Wise Men's story and influence next week in Part 2.